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'Do we need to cut costs or increase revenue to meet a $200,000 shortfall or a $2 million shortfall ... I am not interested in increasing costs and fees merely for the sake of increasing them'
-- Tosca Henry

Cottonwood balances need for more revenue vs. cutting costs on 2018 budget

By JENNIFER VOLPE
Staff Reporter

COTTONWOOD – After a presentation Tuesday evening at a work session, Cottonwood City Council gave staff direction on which revenue opportunities and cost-cutting measures they wanted to get more information on as the budget gets hammered out.

Council agreed to explore a sales tax increase; fees; consolidating services; getting outside agencies to be more competitive when asking for financial support; and merit levels for employees.

Off the table is privatizing the Cottonwood Recreation Center. Closing the softball facility and the library were also frowned upon.

Council Member Tosca Henry asked during the work session if there was a clear goal for the budget.

"[Tuesday] night, council was asked to give direction to staff regarding increasing revenue streams and cutting costs, after being advised that we needed to make 'drastic' cuts or revenue increases to address a budget deficit," responded Henry to an email sent by the *Verde Independent*.

"However, no information was provided as to the amount of the budget deficit, in order for council to provide guidance on how to address it. Do we need to cut costs or increase revenue to meet a $200,000 shortfall or a $2 million shortfall? If there is no shortfall, and we have a balanced budget, adequate reserves, and are addressing debt service appropriately, as council was informed by staff last year, then I am not interested in increasing costs and fees merely for the sake of increasing them," said Henry.

"City Manager [Doug] Bartosh summed it up nicely when he said 'it is incumbent on staff to say 'here is the budget, here is the shortfall, how do we address it.' That information was not provided last night, causing council to give direction without information of the amount of the anticipated shortfall," she added.

When asked if it is typically known what the financial need is before suggestions are made, Bartosh told the *Verde Independent*, "Yes, the staff has a good idea of what the needs are because we live it day to day and our role is to be able to justify those needs to the city council. The council is then equipped to provide direction. The council had good questions last night and their need for further information is an important part of their role in protecting the public's investment."

Below are highlights of the presentation given at the work session.

Possible revenue opportunities
Transaction Privilege Tax (TPT)

Cottonwood's Transaction Privilege Tax is 3 percent. The city does not have a property tax.

As a point of comparison, Camp Verde (special district property tax and sanitary district debt retirement) is 3.65 percent; Sedona is 3.5 percent; Clarkdale (general property tax and fire district tax) is 3 percent; and Jerome (general

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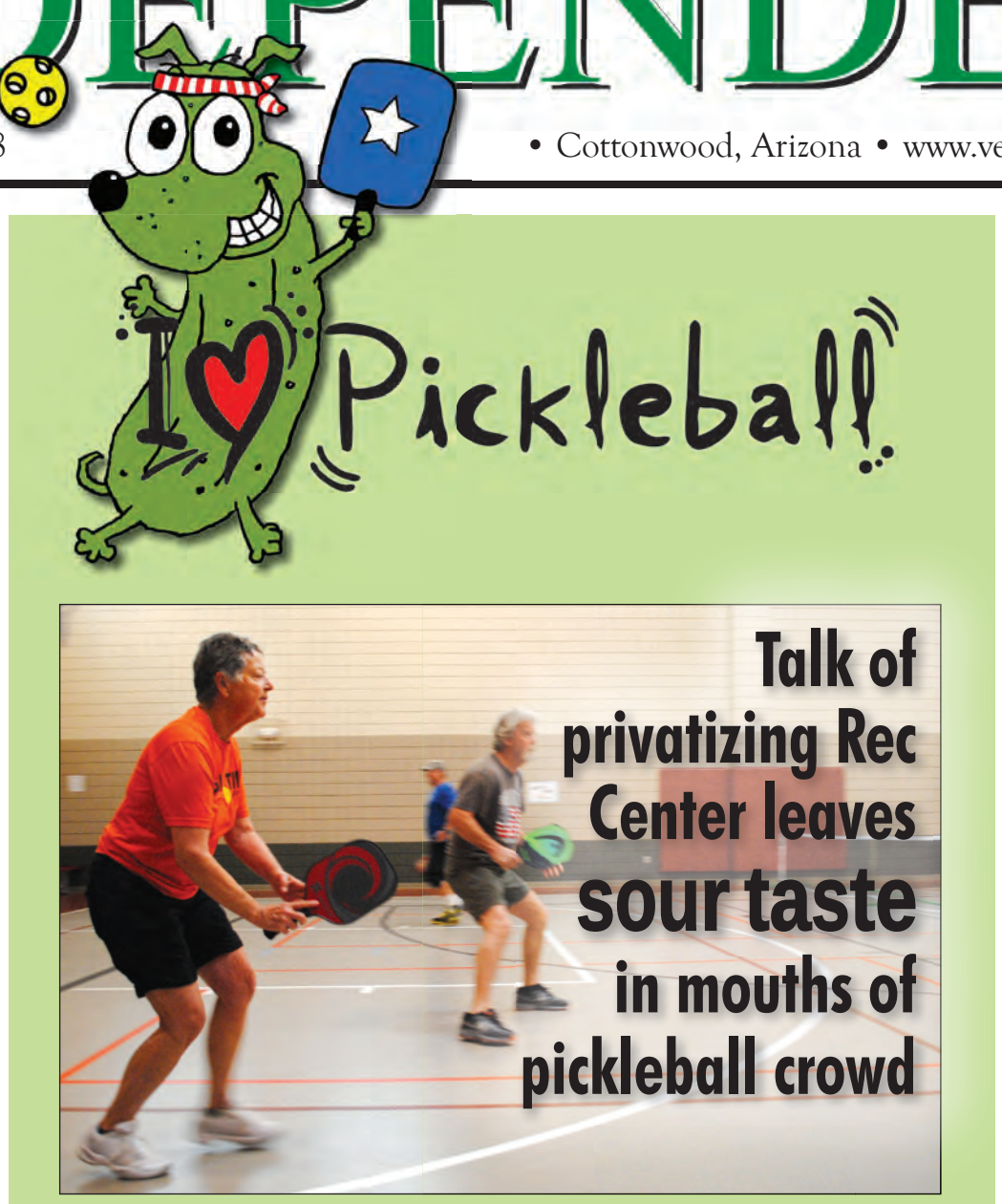

Talk of privatizing Rec Center leaves sour taste in mouths of pickleball crowd

Pickleball enthusiast Terri Clements plays a game at the Cottonwood Recreation Center Wednesday morning. (VVN/Jennifer Volpe)

Pack of passionate pickleball players show adamant support for Cottonwood Recreation Center

By JENNIFER VOLPE
Staff Reporter

COTTONWOOD – Cottonwood City Council members found themselves in quite a pickle Tuesday night.

"I don't think I've ever seen so many people at a work session," said Mayor Tim Elinski to a standing-room-only crowd.

The back of the room cheered and clapped in recognition.

A pack of passionate pickleball players came to show their adamant support of the Cottonwood Recreation Center.

As Cottonwood works to iron out its budget for 2019, potential cost-cutting items have come up for discussion.

One of which was to privatize the rec center.

After hearing this, pickleball aficionado Terri Clements rallied as many players as she could and encouraged them to attend the work session that was dedicated to budget discussions.

About 20 enthusiastic pickleballers were present to give their unwavering support.

Clements, along with a few others, spoke before the council to emphasize how vital the rec center is to the community.

The pickleball posse reacted to each speech with both applause and vocal encouragement.

City council unanimously agreed that privatizing the rec center was off the table.

"For me, it never was on the table," said Council Member Tosca Henry. The council nodded in agreement.

After a revenue and cost-cutting presentation, the council directed staff to explore a sales tax increase; fees; consolidating services; getting outside agencies to be more competitive when asking for financial support; and merit levels for employees.

Elinski joked that they will also explore a pickleball tax.

VVN Archive Photo by Vyto Starinskas

> "I don't think I've ever seen so many people at a work session,"
> Mayor Tim Elinski to a standing-room-only crowd.

The addiction

Clements said she got hooked the very first time she played a few years ago.

A friend who was recovering from heart surgery recommended it to her.

"I said 'pickleball? That's kind of a silly name for a game,'" recollected Clements.

But she bought a paddle the same day she gave it a go.

Part of the addiction is that every age can play it, surmised the pickleball enthusiast.

"You can play with an older person, you can play with a younger person, and still have that competitive game," explained Clements.

Because it is so popular at the rec center, you almost never see singles, which means a smaller portion to defend.

"I have a new hip. I can play even with a new hip. Deb has two new knees. Even if you have some handicaps that might limit your activity for other things, you can still play pickleball," she said.

Cottonwood players age in range from 12 to 82. And it's growing rapidly. Clements just learned that the sport grows by 27 percent each year. Newbies come in each week. About 100 people are on the pickleball email list.

"We've

VVN Archive Photo by Vyto Starinskas

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Jerome police hope to begin parking permit system by May

By HALIE CHAVEZ
Staff Reporter

JEROME – Police Chief Allen Muma said it is the department's goal to operate a parking permit system by May 1, according to a report submitted to the Jerome Town Council.

Police Chief Allen Muma

The Jerome Council passed Ordinance No. 432, a residential parking permit ordinance, at the Dec. 12 regular meeting.

The ordinance will initiate a parking permit system based on the number of "recognized dwelling units" along a street. Each unit "shall be entitled for one free residential permit" for public street parking. The language does not grant residents an assigned spot, but one spot somewhere on the street. The exception is for residents with a handicap, who will be given preference to a designated handicap spot.

In some areas, there may be extra or not enough space – at which point a lottery system will determine which units get a permit or additional permits.

Vehicles found to be in violation of the system will be given a $25 citation. The funds from citation will be put toward improving further parking conditions within town. So far the project has cost $400 in materials.

The ordinance comes as an effort to relieve parking burdens for Jerome residents. Tourists who park in residential areas and Jerome residents with multiple cars parked on the street have been identified as problematic for residents who wish to park close to their homes.

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